

Draba aurea Vahl ex Hornem.

golden draba

Brassicaceae (Mustard Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G5S2

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1964): This grayish to greenish short-lived perennial is 4 to 19½ in. (10 to 50 cm) tall with a simple to branched crown. There are 1 to several stems that are erect or decumbent (lying close to the ground without rooting adventitiously). The stems are hairy. The leaves at the base of the plant form rosettes. They are petiolate (stalked), mostly oblanceolate, entire or toothed, and ¼ to 2 in. (1 to 5 cm) long. The stem leaves are sessile or subsessile, ovate to oblanceolate, and entire or finely toothed. The inflorescences are racemes (unbranched and elongated, with stalked flowers that mature from the bottom upwards). The racemes are long and generally without bracts. The flower pedicels (stalks) are 1/8 to ¾ in. (3 to 20 mm) long. The sepals are 1/16 to 1/8 in. (2 to 3.5 mm) long. The petals are pale to deep yellow and 1/8 to ¼ in. (4.5 to 6 mm) long. The silicles (fruits) are lanceolate, ¼ to ¾ in. (7 to 20 mm) long, 1/16 to 1/8 in. (2 to 4 mm) broad, and softly pubescent or glabrous. The style is up to 1/16 in. (0.3 to 1.5 mm) long. There are 20 to 50 seeds that are about 1/32 in. (1 mm) long.

Identification Tips: *Draba aurea* is most closely related to *Draba aureola*. These two species can be distinguished by their mature silicles and their stem leaves. The mature silicles of *D. aurea* are narrowly to broadly lanceolate and 1/16 to 1/8 in. (2 to 4 mm) broad and its stem leaves are not closely crowded at the stem base. The mature silicles of *D. aureola* are ovate-oblong to oblong-elliptic and usually over 1/8 in. (4 mm) broad and its stem leaves are numerous and closely crowded at the stem base.

Phenology: *Draba aurea* is identifiable from June to August.

Range: This species is found from Alaska southward through out Canada and Washington, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico. In Washington this species has been found in Whatcom and Okanogan counties.

Habitat: Throughout its range, this species grows on forested slopes and in alpine meadows. In Washington this taxon has

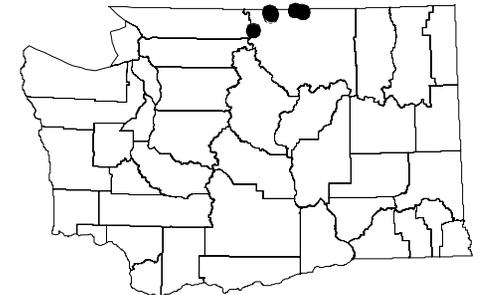
Draba aurea

golden draba



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Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish

Known distribution
of *Draba aurea*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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been found in fellfields and dry slopes to lush meadows in the subalpine zones at an elevation of 6800 to 7700 ft (2073 to 2347 m). Associated species included varileaf cinquefoil (*Potentilla diversifolia*), kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), slender mountain sandwort (*Arenaria capillaris*), elegant Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium elegans*), Pacific lupine (*Lupinus lepidus*), sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina*), oneflower cinquefoil (*Potentilla uniflora*), grouse whortleberry (*Vaccinium scoparium*), dwarf bilberry (*Vaccinium caespitosum*), Davidson's penstemon (*Penstemon davidsonii*), and common juniper (*Juniperus communis*).

Ecology: This species prefers dry, relatively open, sunny areas at high elevations.

State Status Comments: This species is known from less than 10 recent occurrences, several of which are extremely small. This species is peripheral in Washington and is limited to a small geographic area.

Inventory Needs: Open areas in the subalpine zone in Whatcom and Okanogan counties should be systematically surveyed for additional populations. Known occurrences should be revisited.

Threats and Management Concerns: Definite threats have not been identified for this species. However, the small range of this species in Washington and the small number of known occurrences is a concern.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1964. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 2: Salicaceae to Saxifragaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 597 pp.

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